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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8473
INFO RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL PRIORITY

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA A/S SHANNON, DAS MCMULLEN AND WHA/EX ROBERTSON
STATE ALSO FOR S, D, P, E, T, M, G, R, S/ES, S/ES-O, A, CA,
DS, RM, H, L, PA, PM AND USAID - CARDENAS
USCINCSO FOR COMMANDER AND POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [AMGT](#) [AEMR](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [AFIN](#) [ASEC](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZED DEPARTURE

REF: LA PAZ 1942 AND PREVIOUS

11. (SBU) Summary and action request: After intermittent clashes in the past weeks, the level of violence in Bolivia has increased dramatically with deaths, wounded, and troop movements. Air traffic into the country is limited due to difficulties and uncertainty at the Santa Cruz commercial airport. Food and fuel are unavailable in some areas of the country and is expected to become scarce in La Paz in the coming days. Mission employees have been or are being removed from areas of high-tension such as the Chapare, Santa Cruz, and Trinidad (Beni department). President Morales' anti-American rhetoric has worsened recently, and the government informed us that Ambassador Goldberg was persona non grata on September 11. President Morales' Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) allies are blaming the Mission and Ambassador Goldberg for the recent strife and deaths in the country. The potential for general violence is rising, and there is an increasing possibility of another attack on the Embassy, particularly with the expected USG announcement regarding drug certification scheduled for September 15. Previous evacuations have shown that due to La Paz's geographic situation (in a bowl with limited egress and where access to the airport can be easily cut off) it is important for us to drawdown as soon as there is a credible risk, as there is now. Action request (para 6): the Ambassador requests, consistent with EAC recommendation, authorized departure for non-essential employees and eligible family members (EFMs) and delegated authority to approve travel of employees and family members at post who do not elect authorized departure. End summary and action request.

12. (SBU) Ongoing tensions between the opposition departments of the media luna (Santa Cruz, Tarija, Pando, Beni) and the ruling Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) government erupted September 10 into widespread violence. Opposition groups forcibly took government installations such as tax offices and state telephone company equipment. In the hydrocarbon producing region of the Chaco, opposition forces took over pipelines and gas fields and threatened refineries. These actions resulted in an explosion at one pipeline which burned for a day. Violence between opposition civic groups and MAS-aligned campesinos resulted in a reported 35 deaths on September 11 in the northern department of Pando (bordering Peru and Brazil.) The government has agreed to meet with Tarija opposition Prefect Mario Cossio September 12 at 1800 for talks but all previous attempts at dialogue have failed.

13. (SBU) The government is moving troops and armored vehicle

regiments toward Santa Cruz and the Chaco gas fields. President Morales is also calling on his MAS-aligned social groups (cocaleros from the Chapare, cooperativist miners, indigenous militia) to fight against the opposition. Opposition groups worry that the troop movements may be intended to arrest their leaders, an act that would likely provoke more riots and bloodshed.

¶4. (SBU) President Morales has consistently alleged that the USG "foments conspiracy" with the opposition. After the June 9 attack on the chancery, Morales publicly congratulated the organizers of the demonstration. Our requests for confirmation of our physical security under the Vienna Convention have been met with weak, not reassuring answers. We have reports of another large protest planned for the Embassy in the next week. Also, some contacts tell us that angry MASists from El Alto (the city of one million mostly MAS-supporters where the airport and many roads connecting La Paz to the rest of the country are located) may intend to come into the southern residential area of La Paz, targeting opposition homes. All Embassy housing is located in the southern residential zone.

¶5. (SBU) President Morales's cocalero followers have already evicted USAID from the Chapare, and on September 9, the government asked DEA to leave the Chapare based on cocalero threats and DEA has been told subsequently that they are indefinitely out of the Chapare. In light of the government's anti-American rhetoric and encouragement of violence against the chancery, the EAC recommends authorized departure in increments of thirty days, a recommendation which the Ambassador endorses. At the same time, political instability and civil unrest in Bolivia can resolve themselves quickly: violence can be followed by normal patterns of activity within days. Keeping the Embassy appropriately staffed and the community reasonably cohesive will require flexibility based on judgments made at ground level. The Ambassador requests, again consistent with EAC recommendation, that the Department delegate to the Charge the authority to approve personal or official travel of employees and EFMs who are at post when departure is authorized and who have not elected to leave under authorized departure.

¶6. (U) Action request: (1) Authorized departure for thirty days for non-essential employees and EFMs; (2) Delegation to the Charge for travel decisions for employees and family members not "caught out" at the time authorized departure is granted.
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